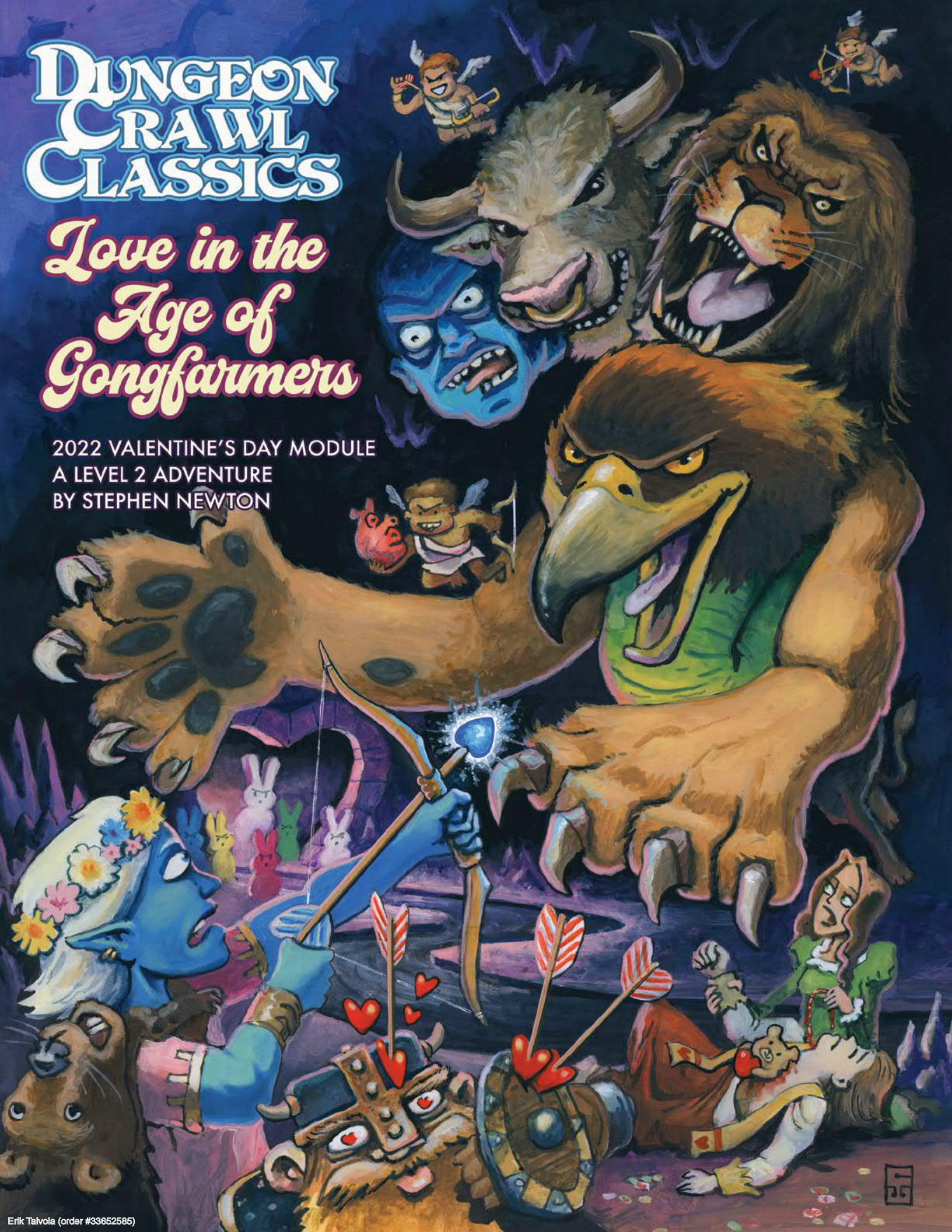


DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

Love in the Age of Gongfarmers

2022 VALENTINE'S DAY MODULE
A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
BY STEPHEN NEWTON



Love in the Age of Gangfarmers

2022 VALENTINE'S DAY MODULE



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INTRODUCTION

Move in the *Age of Gongfarmers* is a Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure designed for 4-6 2nd-level characters. The adventure draws inspiration from the legends related to the origins of the Valentine's Day holiday and other modern Valentine's Day tropes. The adventure contains elements that may be considered bawdy and not appropriate for younger players. Judges are encouraged to read the adventure in advance to judge for themselves what may or may not be appropriate for their table.

JUDGE'S BACKGROUND

The adventure takes place in the small town of Terri where the annual festival celebrating Markhall, demi-god of courtly love, inspirational messages, and mischief, is taking place. Typically, this is a boisterous and bacchanalian festival celebrated by young and old alike. Unfortunately for the PCs, this year, Markhall has been offended by one of Their followers and has plans to sabotage Their own celebration.

The background: a young cleric of the cherub Cupid named Valentinus has fallen in love with Julia, a girl who had been blind since birth. As it so happens, Julia is the daughter of the town magistrate Asterius, who is a follower of the demi-god Markhall and one of the main organizers of the festival. For months, Valentinus offered to attempt to cure Julia's blindness through the grace of his deity. Julia was reticent to accept a gift from a cleric of Cupid given her father's close binds to Markhall, but eventually relented. On the eve of Markhall's festival while her father was out preparing for the annual festivities, Julia consented to allowing Valentinus to attempt to channel Cupid's divine magic to cure her blindness.

Markhall, who has generously provided for Julia all her life—through acts of power granted to her father Asterius—was not at all pleased. Markhall removed the heart of the insolent Valentinus and replaced it with a “Markhall Bear”—a popular stuffed toy given to children during the festival. The Markhall Bear is magically powered and pumps frantically to keep the young cleric alive (if the reader is familiar with toy mechanical monkeys that bang cymbals together, that is similar to what the Markhall Bear looks like inside the cleric's chest).

Markhall, while jealous, is also a demi-god of mischief and is always amused by the toil of mortals. To inspire hope in the cleric's allies, Markhall created a series of challenges and obstacles, along with providing inspirational messages as clues, which can be used to recover the heart of Valentinus and restore him to health. To add further insult and taunt Their rival, Markhall has designed magic weapons similar to those used by Cupid which can be found and used by the PCs, but constructed them mockingly in the style of children's toys.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure starts during the Festival of Markhall. Once the PCs meet Julia and Valentinus in the cave (area 2), they will learn the details described in the *Judge's Background* and begin the adventure in earnest by taking a skiff through the “The Funnel of Love”, a series of caverns which appear natural, but actually exist on Markhall's native plane. Julia will plead to join the PCs on their quest (and insist they carry the inert Valentinus with them), but she is a non-combatant. At the end of the adventure, the PCs will face the cherub dragon.

During the adventure, the Markhall Bear will bleat out sardonic “inspirational messages” (see *Appendix II*) to provide clues, goad the PCs, or just remind the PCs that the Valentinus is more than likely going to die soon. The Markhall Bear provides a helpful clue before each encounter, described in the read-aloud text.

The encounters in the Funnel of Love provide the PCs an opportunity to collect Cupid's Arrows — magical arrows that can be vital in the defeat of the cherub dragon (see *Appendix III*). While there is nothing preventing the PCs from speeding through the tunnel avoiding encounters altogether, the magic arrows which can be collected will be very helpful in defeating the cherub dragon. Note: while the Markhall Bear will allude that the PCs need to collect certain items (roses, chocolate, etc.) these are not a requirement to solving the adventure — it's merely another way that Markhall “inspires hope” in mortals.

Before the PCs travel from one encounter to the next, there will be an item floating on the stream which foreshadows what they will face in the upcoming location.

PLAYER START

The PCs begin the adventure at the Festival of Markhall – an annual courtship festival celebrating Markhall (loosely based on the actual Lupercalia festival of ancient Rome).

Area 1 — Festival of Markhall: *The air is crisp and filled with sounds of joy and laughter as you and your friends arrive at the Festival of Markhall – the annual celebration of the demi-god Markhall’s industriousness, fertility, and romance. During this celebration, folks of all races meet near the misty entrance of Markhall’s Cave to watch the Markhall pontifices oversee a bawdy fertility ritual.*

To start the ritual, two giant beavers (also known as gicastors) are trapped and caged and have a gelatinous fluid extracted from their musk sacs – a process that is unpleasant to both the gicastor and the unfortunate soul performing the extraction. Given its inherent dangers, the pontifices of Markhall use kobold “volunteers” to perform the extraction.

The musk sac gel is then mixed with sugar and egg yolks into a concoction collegially known as “nog”. Revelers collect switches from nearby trees, dip them into the nog and chase each other to show their amorous intentions. Being slapped with a nog-dipped Markhall Strip is an indication that someone desires to spend a romantic fortnight with you under Markhall’s Moon.

The ritual begins! The screeching of the giant beavers heralds that the kobolds have successfully completed the musk extraction. This year only 3 of the kobold laborers were dismembered by the angry, uncomfortable beasts! A fortuitous omen! The crowd grows restless as the pontifices and revelers begin the courtship rites. Excited revelers dip their switches into the nog and zealously eye other celebrators to slap!

A few of your fellow villagers come prancing your way waving thin bands dripping with nog. They seem eager to express their romantic intentions.

The PCs may join the festivities by dipping their own switch and attempting to chase others, avoid being chased, or something entirely different (see **Partaking in the Festival** below.). On the second round after the PCs have had a chance to choose their actions, see **Festival Interrupted** to continue.

PARTAKING IN THE FESTIVAL

Judges are encouraged to make the fertility festival entertaining, but not creepy (this is a Valentine’s Day-themed adventure, after all). The following are some ideas about how to run the festival at the table, but the judge should adapt based on their players’ comfort levels. The two festival pontifices of Markhall (both cloaked in full-body, gicastor-skin robes) are also there to make sure things don’t get too out of hand. Note: judges who like to run a “darker” themed game should substitute one of the nameless pontifices with Julia’s father Asterius.

Markhall Pontifices (2): Init +0; Atk sacrificial daggers of Markhall +1 melee (1d6 + *blood loss*); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 6 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP spellcasting (+2 spell check):

spells (1st) *detect magic, food of the gods, protection from evil, resist cold or heat, word of command*; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C; Crit III/d8.

Sacrificial Daggers of Markhall: The pontifices of Markhall fight with extra keen daggers meant for removing musk sacs. Targets struck must make a DC 12 Fort save or incur an additional 1d3 hit points of blood loss damage.

- **Musk-slap an NPC to gain a romantic follower:** The PC has found love! DC 12 Personality check. Success indicates the NPC is receptive to the PC’s “advances” and agrees to become a “romantic follower” for the remainder of the adventure or perhaps longer (see p. 310, DCC RPG for examples). PCs who gain a romantic follower receive +1 to Will saves while the romantic follower remains healthy. If a romantic follower dies, the PC suffers a -1 penalty to all Will saves and loses 1 Luck point.
- **Avoid being musk-slapped by an NPC:** “It’s not you it’s me...” The PC is approached by a reveler who does not strike their fancy. DC 12 Ref save to avoid being slapped. Success indicates the PC avoids any entanglements and receives +1 to initiative rolls for 1d4 turns for deftly handling the situation. Failure indicates the PC has left someone with a broken heart and incurs a -1 penalty to initiative rolls for 1d4 turns.

EVENT: FESTIVAL INTERRUPTED

Jocular flirtation and the smell of gicastor musk pervades the festival green as revelers, now spattered with nog, begin to pair up and peel away. However, your mirth is interrupted when you notice that some of the playful squeals of delight have transformed into screams of terror. Looking over to the source of the noise, you see that the gicastors have somehow escaped from their cages and have started rampaging through the crowd.

In addition, someone, or something, has adorned the recently slain kobolds with glowing red necklaces of linked jewel hearts. Despite their savage wounds the hearts have revived the vermin! The kobolds open their eyes – now a milky shade of death’s gray – and begin shambling towards the revelers with a malice unique to those who have suffered from an untimely death.

The demi-god Markhall, in the ultimate act of disapproval (see **Judge’s Background**), has freed the agitated gicastors and animated the kobolds slain from the musk extraction ritual. The surviving kobolds will either flee or turn on their captors at the discretion of the judge.

Angry muskless gicastors (2): Init +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 18, 16; MV 30’ or swim 30’; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60’; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit M/d8.

Un-dead kobolds (3): Init -1; Atk bite +0 melee (1d4-1); AC 10; HD 1d4; hp 3 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits (can be turned by clerics, do not eat, drink, or breathe, are

immune to critical hits, disease, poison, *sleep*, *charm*, and *paralysis* spells, as well as other mental effects and cold damage); SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C; Crit U/d4.

Kobold laborers (6): Init -1; Atk bite -2 melee (1d4-1); AC 10; HD 1d4; hp 1 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 100'; SV Fort -2, Ref +0, Will -2; AL N; Crit M/d4.

Markhall Revival Bells (2): Markhall has adorned the kobolds with magical necklaces which can invoke un-dead reanimation for a short period of time. The bells can be used a total of 3 times to bring a recently deceased creature or PC back to life with 1 hp for 5 rounds if applied within 1 day of their death.

Once the immediate threat has been dealt with, the PCs can recover the ceremonial daggers and the Markhall Revival Bells. The PCs will hear a wailing coming from behind the mists of the nearby cave entrance.

Area 2 — Inside Markhall Cave: *Passing through the pink mists, you find yourself in a small cave. A young woman is here weeping over the inert form of a man. The skin on the man's chest has been flayed open and his ribs have been removed. Where his heart should be, you see a small fluffy bear, like one a child might own. The bear is soaked from the blood pooling in the man's open chest. Between its tiny paws the bear holds a mechanical heart. The bear's arms frantically pump the heart, somehow miraculously keeping the man barely alive.*

Beyond the couple, a small underground stream flows down into dark caverns. Rose petals drift along the top of the water.

Julia's Story: The young woman, Julia, willfully tells the story about herself and her suitor, the cleric Valentinus. She explains how it is her fault that the young cleric is being spitefully punished by Markhall for having the audacity to receive assistance from another deity's healing magic to cure her blindness. She gives the PCs the note Valentinus left for her. Once the skiff appears (see below) Julia will insist upon accompanying the PCs, and ask them to carry the inert Valentinus, so they can recover his heart.

Julia: Init -2; Atk dagger +0 melee (1d4); AC 9; HD 1d4; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 30', detect invisible creatures and objects; SV Fort -1, Ref -2, Will +1; AL L; Crit III/d6.

Note: Julia now has infravision and the ability to see invisible creatures and objects (q.v. *detect invisible* spell) from the miraculous cure to her blindness.

Valentinus' Note: Valentinus' note provides both background info and is a clue for the puzzle in area 4.

"My dearest Julia, I'm afraid that Cupid's blessing to restore your sight has angered Markhall. Even now I feel the pain in my chest where Markhall seeks to make an example of me for calling upon the aid of another god on the day of Their festival. However, I would give both my heart and my eyes to see you brought whole again. May we meet again in the sweet afterlife. I love you. Sugar Sugar. Your Valentine."

Markhall Bear: In an act of deiform spite, Markhall has replaced Valentinus' heart with a derisive Markhall Bear (See

Appendix II); it keeps Valentinus just barely alive. Once the PCs examine or address the bear, it will give the first of its clues:

"Proving true love can crack a heart of stone, but there are trap-pings that softens the clay: a head of chocolate for the mouth... pink flowers for the hair... and arrows that slay the beast that is jealousy."

Once the Markhall Bear delivers its message, a small pink and white skiff that seats 8 magically appears upon the stream. It has no oars and will not budge unless at least 5 occupants climb aboard. Once it holds the prerequisite number of occupants, it begins to slowly propel itself down the watery caverns towards area 3.

Valentinus: the young cleric is effectively in a coma—a result of the shock from having his heart replaced with a magical bear. He can be briefly revived for one round through magical healing or by having a Markhall Revival Bell put upon his body. Once revived, Valentinus will gasp out a few clues for the PCs (or a single clue per revival session):

- Markhall isn't as perturbed as They claim to be, but They are a demi-god of mischief, so replacing a human's heart with a mechanical bear is true to Their character.
- Markhall loves to both give and receive gifts – chocolates, flowers, and poetry. They will no doubt be leaving items to assist whatever quest awaits them.
- Beware! Markhall will likely create opponents and obstacles which make mockeries of Cupid, the cherub angel that Valentinus worships.

Area 3 — The Rose Garden: The first area the skiff stops at is the Rose Garden. As a reminder, the boat will stop at each encounter. The PCs can navigate to the next encounter if they so choose—progress will not be impeded—although the chances of defeating the cherub dragon at the end of the adventure will likely be more difficult.

DON'T GO BREAKING MY (MECHANICAL BEAR) HEART...

The Markhall Bear, while magical, is not a sturdy object and its actions are keeping poor Valentinus alive. If the PCs make a move to remove the bear it will warn, "Does anyone truly recover from a twice broken heart?"

If the PCs remove the bear or the heart from Valentinus' chest, the cleric will immediately start bleeding out and expire within 1 round. See **Restoring Valentinus' Heart** in area 8 for additional information.

Lenient judges may reward PCs who creatively apply healing magic or the *mending* spell with Valentinus' becoming lucid for an additional round during which time he may provide additional clues about how to overcome Markhall's obstacles.



The skiff eventually bumps onto the sands of a fragrant cave filled with multicolor roses – red, white, and yellow. A swarm of brightly colored insects buzz happily around the flowers. High in the branches of one of the rose bushes, the insects swarm around a large heart-shaped clay hive the size of an ogre’s head.

Past some rocks the stream continues into a dark cavern. Pooling near the rocks are a few candy hearts.

As you take stock of the situation, the Markhall Bear gurgles out, “Roses are red, poppies are golden, milady needs pink if you need an organ.”

Add if there are any dwarfs in the party:

While most of you are enjoying the fragrant aroma of roses, the sensitive nose of any dwarf can detect a faint, delicious whiff of silver somewhere nearby.

The PCs will recognize the buzzing insects colloquially known as “love bugs” for the effect their sting has on victims. The love bugs come in 3 different colors (red, white, and yellow) as do the roses. Players who inquire about the bugs’ behavior will notice that the love bugs are attracted to the rose which corresponds with their specific color.

The Markhall Bear has provided the clue that the PCs need to create pink flowers to continue. Below are some ideas of how this could be achieved, but other creative methods should be rewarded.

- Smear pollen from a red flower onto a white rose
- Crush a red love bug onto a white rose
- Using some sort of physical or magical trickery (e.g., *color spray*) to lure the love bugs to cross pollinate a new flower

Attempting to perform any action near flowers swarming with love bugs (e.g., picking a rose, attempting to collect pollen, etc.) requires a deft hand and a DC 10 Pick Pocket check. Failure results in being stung by a love bug (see below).

Hive: The love bugs travel back and forth transporting brightly colored pollen between the flowers and the heart-shaped hive. If the clay hive is broken open, it releases the love bug swarm. Hidden inside the hive is the Cupid’s Arrow with “Flirty Lavender” fletching. Honey collected from within the hive can be used as a *potion of levitation* (see p. 224, DCC RPG). If the arrow is retrieved, Valentinus will briefly awaken and mutter, “Love quells even the most savage of beasts.”

Love Bug Swarm: Init +4; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (1 plus kissing twitch sting); AC 11; HD 4d8; hp 22; MV fly 40’; Act special; SP kissing twitch, bite all targets within 20’ x 20’ space, half damage from non-area attacks, sting (DC 5 Fort save or additional 1d4 damage plus kissing twitch); SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will -2; AL N; Crit M/d6.

Kissing Twitch: The stung PC is afflicted with a neurological twitch resulting in the PC making a “smooching” noise for the next 1d4 turns. PCs with the kissing twitch suffer a -1d penalty to initiative rolls and make any attempts to Sneak Silently or Hide in Shadows with a -2d penalty.

The love bug swarm occupies a 20’ x 20’ space and inflicts its stinging damage on any creatures within that space. Any creature stung must make a successful Fort save or also suffer from the kissing twitch. Love bug swarms take half damage from any attack that is not an area effect.

Area 4 — Candy Hearts & Hellephant: *The skiff travels briskly down a cavern stream and eventually bumps upon the sandy shore of an underground cavern. Squatting in the middle of the cavern is a large hellephant with tiny wings. The beast wears a jaunty hat with a red bow around its neck. The hellephant has a chain around its neck which is tethered to a brightly feathered stake driven deep into the ground. Its tiny pink eyes grow wide with excitement at your arrival.*

Near the center of the cavern, just out of the reach of the hellephant's snout, is a large clay pedestal with a bowl like depression in its center. It reminds you of the baptismal font in Valentinus' church.

As you marvel at the majesty of the winged hellephant and its chapeau, the Markhall Bear gurgles out, "A fine wine will remove inhibition, but a lover's stanza will remove scorn."

Beyond the hellephant, on the other side of cave, another stream leads into the darkness. Drifting along on the top of the water are faint harmonies.

Add if there are any dwarfs in the party:

The air is tainted with smoke and a musky animal odor from the hellephant. And yet, any dwarfs' sensitive nose can detect a faint, delicious whiff of electrum somewhere nearby.

The Markhall Bear has provided the clue that the safest way to continue is to feed the hellephant a "lover's stanza" —i.e., the line on the note that Valentinus left for Julia (see below).

The font holds 100 candy hearts, each with a flirty message on it. If a PCs pulls a heart without specifying they're searching for a specific message, roll a d20 to randomly determine which candy is selected:

1. I love you
2. Kiss Me
3. Adventurer in the dungeon, gongfarmer in the sack
4. I drop my iron for elves
5. Your Valentine
6. Dwarves love in the dark
7. Some Bunny Loves You
8. Be Mine
9. Smoochie Smoochie
10. Halflings use both hands
11. My Mighty Deed of Arms is to love you
12. Sugar Sugar
13. Make a Luck check to recover my body
14. Thieves climb my sheer surfaces
15. My 0-level occupation is Love Doctor
16. Level Up!
17. I'd burn my Luck for you
18. Lay On Hands and tell me you love me
19. No Disapproval here
20. So Tasty

If a PC consumes one of the candies, roll a d20 modified by Luck to determine its effect:

<= 5	Bad Romance: PC takes 1d6 poison damage (DC 12 Fort save for half)
6-12	I Want to Know What Love Is: no effect, but tastes delicious
13-18	How Deep is Your Love? +1d bonus to attack rolls for next 1d6 rounds
19-20	Sexual Healing: restores 1d4 hit points; candy heart can be spit out and saved for later

Hellephant: The hellephant is a simple, happy creature with a demeanor comparable to that of an excited puppy. It wants nothing more than to eat the candy hearts just out of reach of its long trunk. If the hellephant is fed a heart, it will emit a fiery blast of appreciation from its trunk making it evident to the PCs it is hungry for more. If the PCs feed it hearts with the following messages in order "Love You", "Sugar Sugar", "Your Valentine" (Valentinus's final line in his note to Julia), the hellephant will roll over in a blissful sugar coma drooling flammable hellephant saliva. However, if the hellephant is fed 8 or more candies, it will break free of its bonds in a belligerent sugar-rush rage attacking all within sight. If the hellephant is unchained, it will charge toward the font, gorge itself on candy hearts, and then commence in its sugar-rush rampage.

Hellephant: Init +1; Atk trample +6 melee (1d6+2) and flame snout +4 missile fire (1d6 plus DC 14 Ref save or catch fire (p. 96, DCC RPG)); AC 17; HD 4d8; hp 26; MV 20' or fly 10'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +6; AL N; Crit M/d10.

The hellephant's saliva is extremely flammable (1d8 fire damage). If the hellephant is dispatched or put to sleep, 2 flasks worth can be collected.

The "stake" to which the hellephant is tethered is a Cupid's Arrow with "Calm Blue Sky" fletching. It can be easily pulled up by any of the PCs; it is only the enchanted hellephant which struggles against it. (If the arrow is pulled up while the hellephant is still awake, it requires a DC 30 Strength check to pull the charging animal back from the candy bowl.) Once the arrow is retrieved, Valentinus will briefly awaken and mutter, "Humor is the best medicine against anger..." before falling back into unconsciousness.

Area 5 — Ophelia the Harpy: *The skiff eventually comes to rest beneath a tall willow tree. A 7-foot-tall adult female curiously dressed in child-like attire and a bright red cloak sits in the tree strumming a lute. She is humming a tune to herself. As you approach, she asks "Greetings o noble lords and ladies! I have longed for your arrival. Would it please you to hear me play?"*

The Markhall Bear, still pumping away in Valentinus' chest, is oddly silent.

Where the stream continues, the water is swirling with a brown film.

If the PCs ask the Markhall Bear about the woman, the bear will respond, "Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia! O heavens! Is't possible a young maid's wits should be as mortal as an old man's life?"

LOVE IN THE AGE OF GONGFARMERS



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

7a

7b

7c



8



The Flaminian Gate

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Ophelia: The “woman” in the tree is Ophelia, a young harpy. She has the appearance of a 7-foot-tall adult woman curiously dressed as an adolescent young girl in her “Sunday best” clothes. Ophelia wears a red cloak which conceals her scaly skin and folded wings. Ophelia has gone mad, and her mind has reverted to a childlike state—an effect of the trauma she’s been subjected to by the adventurers which have passed through her cove.

Ophelia desperately wants to hear the characters sing for her. For each PC/player that agrees to sing, she will strum along on her lute. To satisfy her request the player (not the PC, but the actual player at the table) will need to sing a few stanzas of a song of their choosing.

If all the PCs/players sing, she will be so pleased she will say “Sweets for the sweet!” and then offer the PCs her lute. Strapped to the neck of the lute is a Cupid’s Arrow with “Mint Salad” fletching.

If any PC/player refuses to sing or if the PCs try to bypass the harpy without singing, Ophelia will quote a line which has been attributed to her by several well-known bards (“Good night, ladies. Good night, sweet ladies. Good night, good night.”). She will then start singing her *captivating song* (see below) and attacking all those who are not enchanted by her sonnet.

Ophelia’s Lute: With a DC 15 Agility check, the lute grants a +1 initiative bonus to listeners 2/day. PCs with a background occupation of minstrel receive a +2 bonus to their check.

Ophelia (harpy): Init +1; Atk claws +3 melee (1d4); AC 13; HD 5d8; hp 24; MV 20’ or fly 40’; Act 1d20; SP captivating song (DC 13 Will save); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +8; AL N; Crit M/d10.

Ophelia’s Captivating Song: If any of the PC/players refuse to sing for her, she will commence with her captivating song. Those that fail their DC 13 Will save will walk towards the stream to be swept downriver and drown. PCs not enchanted can use their action to prevent enchanted PCs from wandering into the stream but are considered helpless (see p. 78, DCC RPG) if attacked.

Ophelia’s Captivating Song:

To-morrow is Saint Valentine’s day,

All in the morning bedtime,

And I a maid at your window,

To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose and donn’d his clo’es

And dupp’d the chamber door,

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

Area 6 - The Giant Chocolate Bunny: The skiff bumps along underground rapids before sliding up against a grassy meadow. The air is rich with a sweet smell of sugary confection mixed with smoke from a nearby campfire.

Frolicking in the meadow are hairless, brightly colored rabbits of pink and yellow. They look to be made of a spongy material. They scamper through the meadow collecting sticks with their fluffy teeth.

In the center of the meadow is a giant cauldron surrounded by burning timbers. The colorful bunnies are taking their sticks to feed the cauldron’s fire. Contained within the cauldron is the sculpture of a giant rabbit: nine-feet tall made of a sweet-smelling, brown, clay-like material. The ears of the brown rabbit in the cauldron are beginning to melt and drip like hot wax.

From within the chest of the cleric, you hear the Markhall Bear murmur, “Humans crave gold, dwarves covet gems, and elves seek out their mithril. But a head of chocolate is the prize of lovers.” The bear then looks around at your surroundings before adding, “Wait a second... did we make a wrong turn?”

In the nearby stream, tiny wings float on top of the water.

The PCs have 4 rounds to save the chocolate bunny (or at least its head). Their efforts to abscond with any piece of the chocolate bunny will be thwarted by the “marshmallow fluffees” who are currently melting it down as part of their annual Fluffee Feast.

The cauldron is 6’ high by 6’ wide and is surrounded by 5’ of burning timber stacked by the fluffees. Attempting to cross the fire without protection results in the PC needing to make a DC 12 Ref save. Failure results in them catching fire (p. 96, DCC RPG). Standing within the cauldron results in 1d4 heat damage each round (no save). The giant chocolate bunny and is melting swiftly, but still requires at least 5 hp of damage to remove a sizeable piece (like the head).

At the bottom of the cauldron, unaffected by the heat, is another Cupid’s Arrow – this one is the color of “Chocolate Love”.

If the PCs attempt to extinguish the flames or escape with any part of the chocolate bunny, they will be attacked by 3 giant fluffees (the size of kangaroos) and 3 jellybean fluffee slingers (about the size of small goblins) that are hiding in the tall grass.

Giant fluffees (3): Init +2; Atk kick +3 melee (1d6 + DC 15 Ref save or knocked prone); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 10 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP vulnerable to fire-based attacks (x2 damage); SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; M/d8.

The giant fluffees will attack with their sticky marshmallow legs. Opponents struck by the giant fluffees are knocked prone.

Fluffee slingers (3): Init -1; Atk jellybean sling +1 missile fire (1d3 + scent); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV 30’; Act 1d20; SP disarm opponents (on a crit, treat as a d5 roll on the Disarming Attacks Mighty Deed of Arms table (p. 89, DCC RPG)), vulnerable to fire-based attacks (x2 damage); SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AL C; Crit M/d6.

Any PC struck with one of the jellybeans must make a DC 12 Fort save or be enveloped by flavor-cloud related to the jellybean.

Roll 1d4 if struck. All effects last for 1d6 turns.

Result	Jellybean Flavor	Effect
1	Brandolyn Red Wine	Dark red bean which surrounds the PC in a mist that smells like a delicious wine. PC is restored 2 hp (or is granted 2 temporary hp if they're already at full hit points.)
2	Tuna Scales	White bean which surrounds the PC in a mist which smells like rank fish. The cats in area 7a are attracted to PCs covered in this smell.
3	Goblin Sweat	Dark green bean which envelops the target in the noxious rotting-meat smell of goblin sweat. Any PC standing within 10' of the affected PC makes attack rolls or spell checks at a -1d penalty from the stench.
4	Tobacco Juice	A dark brown bean which makes the PC smell like your grandfather's spit cup. PC gets a +2 bonus to Fort saves.

Area 7 — Love Is...: *The skiff navigates on calm waters through the caverns before stopping at a bleak strand of coarse gravel at the base of a towering cliff face of stone. The underground stream has reached its terminus.*

Inset into the great stone face are 3 giant doors. The doors are painted bright shades of pink and white and are covered in strange ruins.

The movements of the Markhall Bear's arms seem to be slowing down. From within the young cleric's hollow chest, you hear the bear croak out, "Love comes in many forms, but only one path will bring you closer to Valentinus' true heart."

The 3 doors open to the demi-god Markhall's sardonic representations of love. The runes on the doors are written in 3 languages: Chaos, Angelic/Celestial, and Undercommon. (If none of the PCs are conversant with those languages, they can be deciphered with a successful *comprehend languages* spell, or if the cleric Valentinus is briefly revived as he studied Celestial while in Seminary.)

Area 7a — Door 1: "The Life of a Bachelor/Spinstress":

The first door opens using a has a silver handle which has been electrified. It can be easily detected (DC 10 Detect Traps check). The trap can be avoided if PCs open the door with a piece of wood or other material that does not conduct electricity – otherwise the opener takes 1d6 electric damage (no save).

Opening the door reveals a small chamber containing 9 cats. Each of the cats wears a collar with a silver name tag, but one of the cats (Baytee) has a magically enchanted platinum collar which allows the wearer a single automatic success on a recover the body roll with no permanent ability penalties from the effect.

It requires a DC 12 Agility check to catch a cat; failure results in 2 damage and that cat escapes out of the chamber never to be seen again. The names of the cats are listed on their collar: "Covacks", "Gode", "Gudmon", "Kurtiz", "Baytee", "Haarlee", "Burnick", "Ohlsun", and "Gen".

If any of the PCs have been struck by a "Tuna Scales" flavored jellybean, they will immediately be attacked by "Gode", "Gen", and "Burnick". If any of the cats are physically harmed, they will all attack the aggressor.

Angry cat (up to 8): Init +1; Atk claws -1 melee (1d3 -1); AC 8; HD 1d2; hp 1 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 30'; SV Fort -1, Ref +2, Will +3; AL N; Crit M/d4.

Area 7b — Door 2: "I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me, For I am much ashamed of my exchange...":

Beyond the door is a small 25' x 25' chamber. In the middle of the chamber is a 10' wide shallow fountain pool. In the center of the fountain is a statue of a scaly cherub holding a golden bow. The cherub's body is covered in scales.

Markhall has taken the extreme position that the expression "Love is blind" should be taken literally and has polymorphed a basilisk into a cherub. The basilisk cherub will not attack any PC if their eyes are covered within one round. If any of the PCs do not cover their eyes, the creature will croak out the following line from a poem Markhall once overheard in the astral plane in basilisk-accented common tongue:

"But love is blind and lovers cannot see

The pretty follies that themselves commit;

For if they could, Cupid himself would blush

To see me thus transformed!"

Markhall's intent is to playfully blind the PCs temporarily as They like to watch mortals panic at the slightest inconvenience such as the loss of sight. Markhall finds this prank especially poignant as it was Valentinus curing Julia's blindness becoming the catalyst of the PC's current conundrum. As a deity and above the tribulations of mortals, Markhall is not concerned if the PCs are accidentally permanently blinded. The basilisk cherub is armed with *Cupid's Bow* (see **Appendix IV**) which can be recovered if the basilisk is defeated.

Polymorphed basilisk cherub (3): Init -1; Atk arrow +1 missile fire (1d6) or gaze (special); AC 14; HD 4d8; hp 24; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP gaze (DC 14 Will save); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1; AL C; Crit M/d10.

The basilisk cherub uses an action to lock eyes with a living creature; the target that looks a basilisk cherub in the eye must make a DC 14 Will save or be blinded for 2d6 turns. If the target rolls a natural 1 as their Will save, the blindness is permanent.

Area 7c — Door 3: "Amor Eterno": *A flaxen-haired beauty wearing royal clothes lies upon a stone slab. They are holding a single, perfectly preserved rose across their still chest.*

The Markhall Bear, whose efforts to keep the young cleric alive are becoming noticeably strained, croaks out, "Those who kiss the sleeping beauty will learn the secret of eternal love."

Markhall is making a mockery of the idea of "eternal love" by giving the PCs a chance to love eternally... in the form of becoming un-dead. The sleeping royal, Lucy Aurora, is a cold and lifeless young vampire. Markhall has enchanted Lucy's appearance with a glamour that makes them appear "beautiful" (adapting their gender and countenance as necessary to suit the tastes of the PC gazing upon her). Any PC who kisses Lucy Aurora will be victimized by a surprise attack when Lucy awakens and bites the victim. Lucy Aurora only awakens if she is kissed (or pestered in such a way that the judge feels is appropriate to awaken her.) Note: moving the stone slab she sleeps on without awakening her is a viable option.

After dealing with Lucy Aurora, either by defeating her in her awakened vampire state, or simply moving her aside, the PCs can move the slab she's sleeping on to revealing a passageway leading down into darkness and thence towards area 8.

The rose that Lucy Aurora is holding is one of Cupid's Arrows ("Pink Dream") which has had petals and leaves affixed to it to disguise it.

Lucy Aurora (demi-vampire, the un-dead): Init +2; Atk fist +3 melee (1d8+1) or bite +2 melee (1d6 + cursed); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 14; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP special (see above), vampire traits; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C; Crit U/d6.

As a demi-vampire, Lucy Aurora takes half damage from normal weapons and full damage from magic weapons, weapons forged from precious metal (silver, electrum, mithril, etc.) including Cupid's Arrows, or weapons which have been *blessed*. Lucy Aurora can *charm person* (as per the 1st-level wizard spell at a spell check result of 23), assume gaseous form (as per the potion, p. 224, DCC RPG), and perform *animal summoning* (Lucy summons guinea pigs and pack of corgis as per the 1st-level wizard spell at a spell check result of 23). Victims bitten by Lucy Aurora must make a DC 15 Fort save or become infected with "the vampire curse"; they will become a demi-vampire (same stats as Lucy Aurora) if they are injured by the vampire's bite and brought down to zero hit points.

Area 8 —The Flaminian Gate: The dark tunnel hidden beneath the sleeping beauty's sarcophagus eventually leads to an underground chamber no doubt constructed by the most skilled of dwarves.

In the center of the chamber, a horrific beast awaits your party. The creature is enormous; the size of the dragons your grandmother would tell you about in bedtime stories to frighten you. It has the body of a lion and a thick stalky neck which supports a fleshy mass accommodating 4 brightly colored faces: a human, a bull, a lion, and an eagle.

From inside Valentinus' chest you hear the Markhall Bear gasp, seemingly on its last breath, "Ah, through the Flaminian Gate, the intrepid lovers came upon thee. Behold the original cherubim of myth, the guardians of the gates."

Buzzing around the four-faced monstrosity are four naked toddlers with wings. They are armed with bows and arrows. One of them laughs with glee at your approach and taunts you by dangling a dripping, yet somehow miraculously still beating, human heart.

The PCs have reached the climax of Markhall's challenge and must now face the cherub dragon and his cupid minions to prove themselves worthy to recover the young cleric's still-beating heart.

The cupid henchmen will toss Valentinus' heart back and forth to each another in a macabre game of "keep away" from the PCs. The cupid holding the heart will not attack during that round. The other minions fire their love-sonnet inducing arrows upon the PCs.

The cupid henchmen are flying approximately 15' in the air so a PC wishing to intercept the heart must devise a way to reach that height or make an effort to capture the heart in midair. Some potential ideas are as follows, but judges should reward any creative approach:

- Creative use of *ropework*, *force manipulation*, *gust of wind*, or similar spell to grab the heart in midair
- A successful Mighty Deed of Arms to target the cupid catching the heart or disrupting the trajectory of the heart

Cupid minions (4): Init +4; Atk arrow +1 missile fire (1d5; DC 12 Will save or spend next action reciting a love sonnet); AC 12; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV fly 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N; Crit M/d6.

Roll 1d4	Face	Special Attack	Vulnerability
1	Angry, shouting man whose face has turned blue from exertion	Terrible Curse: The target must make a DC 14 Will save or suffer 1d6 Personality loss plus suffer a -1d penalty non their next attack from weeping from lost love	Calm Blue Sky: The calming effect of the arrow forces the man to start reciting ribald limericks starting with "There once was a man from Nantucket..."
2	Ox with massive tusks of light green	Gored: tusk +2 melee (1d5 plus DC 13 Ref save or additional 1d4 damage as their internal organs are skewered)	Mint Salad: The ox becomes docile and is content to sit and chew its cud.
3	Lion with a light purple mane	Devastating bite: bite +3 melee (1d12)	Flirty Lavender: The lion will be distracted licking its fur.
4	Eagle with dark brown feathers	Screaming Eagle: peck +2 melee (1d4 plus screech: DC 13 Fort save for all within 30' or no spellcasting for 2 turns due to ringing ears)	Chocolate Love: The eagle screech will just make a "fluffee" sound like the fluffees of area 6.

The cherub dragon is a creature summoned from Markhall's native plane. The dragon has the body of a great lion and four faces, each with a distinct ability as well as a vulnerability to a specific Cupid's Arrow. During its attack round, the cherub dragon uses one claw attack followed by two randomly determined "face attacks". The cherub dragon requires its body and all four faces to be brought to zero hit points to be defeated. A face is immediately defeated if hit by a Cupid's Arrow to which it is vulnerable. The colors on the faces, along with Valentinus' clues, should provide clues on which arrow is effective against which face.

Cherub dragon: Init +3; Atk +2 claw melee (1d4) and face (special); AC 16 (applies to both heads and body); HD 6d8; hp 35 (body), 15 (each head); MV 40'; Act 3d20; SP face attacks; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C; Crit DR/d16.

Restoring Valentinus's Heart: Once the PCs manage to retrieve the heart from the minions, it will immediately stop beating. The PCs have two rounds to remove the Markhall Bear from the cleric's chest and restore his original heart. The following are some ideas as to how this miraculous event could be achieved, but the judge is encouraged to reward creative efforts.

- Cleric: either a 3-dice *lay on hands* spell check or a DC 18 *divine aid* spell check
- Wizard or Elf: *invoke patron* check of 18 or above (including at least 2 points of spellburn)
- Thief: A DC 18 Disable Trap check (the mechanical heart is, after all, similar to a complex trap)

The PCs normally only get one attempt at this event – if they fail, Valentinus' open veins spray their crimson contents across all in a 10' radius (DC 12 Ref save to avoid) and the cleric expires immediately (no save). Lenient judges may

permit the PCs a second attempt if they indicate they'd like to incorporate the Markhall Revival Bells as part of the ritual and burning at least 2 points of Luck.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Markhall will not be dismayed if the PCs successfully restore Valentinus's heart. On the contrary, Markhall will reward the PCs by transporting the PCs back to the festival (area 1) with all of the magic items they gained in the Funnel of Love still in their possession (including any arrows originally shot into the cherub dragon).

The cherub angel Cupid will be pleased with the PCs if Valentinus has been liberated from Markhall's chicanery. As a reward, each PC will have their Luck increased by 1 point permanently (max Luck of 18).

The village of Tenri will be amazed at the PCs stories and will begin to include images and expressions from their adventure as part of their annual festival – immediately introducing elements such as hearts, candies, and poetry.

Valentinus and Julia will celebrate their reunion by slapping each other with nog strips before leaving together to celebrate their courtship.

However, there is one faction which will be upset with the PCs and that is the fluffees (area 6). The fluffees are offended the PCs have disrupted their Fluffee Feast ceremony and are planning to seek revenge for the blasphemy. Valentinus will warn the PCs that the fluffees are mustering an army of fluffees and rabbits in their burrows to launch an assault on the town to punish humankind. The PCs are encouraged to launch a preemptive assault on the fluffees in their colorful yet dangerous lair to stop their murderous warren before it multiplies into insurmountable numbers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Julia: daughter of Asterius and lover of the young cleric Valentinus. Begins adventure recently cured of her blindness through Valentinus channeling Cupid's healing magic.
- Valentinus: cleric of Cupid and lover of Julia. He recently cured Julia's blindness and in an act of retribution, Markhall replaced his heart with a magic bear pumping a mechanical device which barely keeps him alive.
- Asterius: father of Julia and devout servant of the demi-god Markhall.
- Markhall (demi-god): patron of Courtly Love, Inspirational Messages, and Mischief. Markhall is responsible for crippling Valentinus and conjuring the Funnel of Love and its obstacles.
- Cupid (cherub): The deity who Valentinus worships whose divine healing magic cured Julia's blindness.

APPENDIX II: MARKHALL BEAR

The Markhall Bear is a magical automaton that resembles a child's plaything. It moves on its own power pumping a mechanical heart between its tiny paws which keeps the cleric Valentinus alive. During the adventure, the Markhall Bear will croak out inspirational message clues for the PCs when they first arrive at a new location. If the PCs attempt to interact with the Markhall Bear at any other time, it will produce some weak wisdom/fortune that may or may not make any sense. Here are some examples, but judges are encouraged to make up some of their own which suits the mood of their campaign:

- "You're the youngest you're ever going to be—make the most of your time."
- "In matters of love, it matters less about where you go, but with whom you travel."
- "Love is blind, but jealousy is all-seeing."
- "A wise gongfarmer smells only the rose which grows in the bag of nightsoil."
- "It is wiser to level up through experience, than through monetary reward."

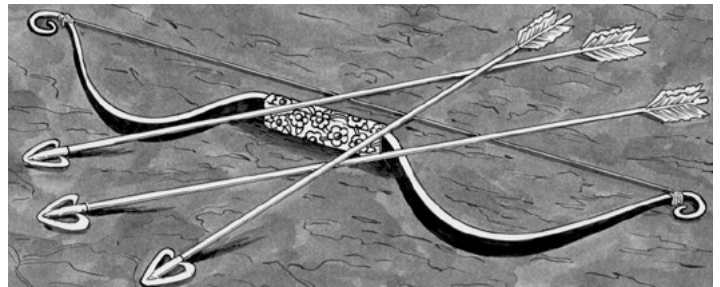
APPENDIX III: CUPID'S ARROWS

The "Cupid's Arrows" are magical devices which Markhall has created as minor rewards for the PCs for them to draw inspiration. Each arrow has brightly colored fletching and has a unique power. When used as arrows, they do normal damage, and can be retrieved if shot into non-magical creatures. Note: arrows retrieved after striking mundane creatures or missing a target maintain their magical properties.

Once per week, a follower of Markhall can call upon Them to invoke the power of the arrow to create an effect similar to the potion or spell listed below. Invoking the power requires a successful spell check (DC 15) which can be attempted by any class.

For each power, see the equivalent potion on p. 224, DCC RPG. All effects last for 1d4 turns.

Fletching Color	Effect
Flirty Lavender	Fire Resistance
Calm Blue Sky	Levitation
Mint Salad	Spider Climb, as per the 1 st -level wizard spell at spell check result of 12
Chocolate Love	Speed
Pink Dream	Gaseous Form



APPENDIX IV: CUPID'S BOW

This magic weapon created by Markhall appears like a harmless child's bow like the one used by Their nemesis Cupid but is actually a powerful magic artifact.

Goals:

- To increase followers of Markhall.

Abilities

- +1 shortbow (1d6 damage)
- +1d attack bonus when shooting one of Cupid's Arrows
- Once per day, the wielder may beseech Cupid or Markhall to protect them from the inferior arrows of mortals. Once invoked, the bow blocks all attacks from non-magical arrows or other mundane missile fire specifically targeting the wielder for 1d6 rounds
- Once per week, wielder can shoot a Love Arrow – treat as a *charm person* spell at spell check result of 17



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A LEVEL 2 ADVENTURE
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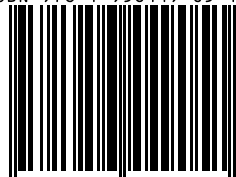
In this special Valentine's Day-themed adventure, the PCs play a group of adventurers who face the wrath of an offended deity who has substituted the heart of a young cleric with that of a mechanical bear. To save the cleric, the PCs must face candy heart puzzles, feral fluffees, and other obstacles if they are to keep hope alive and once again know love in the age of gongfarmers.

Originally conceived and performed as “The Lost Heart of Valentinus in the Funnel Love” for Spawn of Cyclops Con 2021 with the winners of the “Love in the Age of Gongfarmers” contest.



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